

Message Text

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TOSEC 297

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF NEW TORY LEADER,

MRS. MARGARET HILDA THATCHER

NO FOREIGN DISSEM

1. IN VIEW OF THE SURPRISE OCCASIONED BY MRS. THATCHER'S
ELECTION AS LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, AND INASMUCH
AS YOU WILL SOON BE IN LONDON, YOU MIGHT FIND USEFUL THE
FOLLOWING POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY:

2. MRS. THATCHER WAS LITTLE KNOWN INTERNATIONALLY UNTIL
HER RESOUNDING DEFEAT OF EDWARD HEATH AND WILLIAM WHITELAW
FOR THE POST OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER. AS LATE AS
LAST OCTOBER 15 THE LONDON TIMES TERMED HER LEADERSHIP
ASPIRATIONS "UNWORTHY OF SERIOUS CONSIDERATION." WHILE
RECOGNIZED TO BE A STRONG PERSONALITY, SHE WAS NOT CON-
SIDERED OF LEADERSHIP CALIBER AND WAS BELIEVED TO BE TOO
CLOSELY TIED TO THE RIGHT WING OF THE PARTY.

3. EARLY LIFE: MRS. THATCHER, 49, IS THE DAUGHTER OF AN
EAST MIDLANDS GROCER WHO DEVOTED HIS SPARE TIME TO THE
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LOCAL CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND BECAME MAYOR OF GRANTHAM, A

SMALL CITY NORTHEAST OF BIRMINGHAM. HIS SURPLUS FUNDS
WERE DEVOTED TO THE FURTHERANCE OF HIS DAUGHTER'S CAREER.
IN A REVEALING INTERVIEW RECENTLY SHE ASSERTED HER DEEP
LOVE FOR HER FATHER AND DISMISSED HER MOTHER AS BEING A
"NICE WOMAN" BUT SOMEONE WITH WHOM SHE HAS HAD LITTLE

CONVERSATION SINCE THE AGE OF 15.

4. MRS. THATCHER HERSELF WENT TO A MODEST BUT GOOD
GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL, THEN TO OXFORD, WHERE SHE STUDIED
CHEMISTRY FIRST AND THEN LAW. SHE WAS PRESIDENT OF THE
UNIVERSITY CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION.

5. IN 1951, WHEN SHE WAS ONLY 25, SHE CONTESTED HER
FIRST ELECTION, IN DARTFORD, A LABOR STRONGHOLD, AND LOST.
IN 1959 SHE WAS ADOPTED FOR FINCHLEY, A LARGEY MIDDLE-
CLASS LONDON INNER SUBURB, WON IT, AND HAS HELD IT EVER
SINCE.

6. GOVERNMENT CAREER: PRIME MINISTER MACMILLAN NAMED
MRS. THATCHER PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY TO THE MINIS-
TRY OF PENSIONS IN 1961. WHEN THE CONSERVATIVES LOST
POWER IN 1964, SHE BECAME SHADOW MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND
LAND.

7. PRIME MINISTER HEATH PROMOTED HER TO SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY WHEN THE TORIES
RETURNED TO OFFICE IN 1970. SHE SERVED IN THAT POST
COMPETENTLY BUT WITHOUT NOTABLE DISTINCTION UNTIL LABOR
WON THE FEBRUARY 1974 ELECTION.

8. DURING THAT TIME, SHE WAS THE MOST ATTRACTIVE FEMALE
AT TORY CONCLAVES (SHE ONCE MODELED TWEED SUITS FOR THE
SUNDAY TIMES), PROVED HERSELF AN EXCELLENT DEBATER, AND
GAVE AMPLE EVIDENCE OF HER AMBITION AND SELF-CONFIDENCE.
ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING OF THE THATCHERISMS NOW BEING
QUOTED DATES FROM HER CABINET DAYS: "I THINK THAT
PROBABLY OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CABINET I CAN MARSHAL
THE FACTS AND FIGURES AS WELL AS, IF NOT BETTER THAN,
ANYONE THERE. BUT THE LONGER I AM IN POLITICS, THE MORE
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I REALIZE THAT FACTS ARE NOT THE DETERMINING THINGS.
FEELINGS ARE WHAT COUNT--FEELINGS WHICH ARE TOTALLY OUT OF
ACCORD WITH SOME OF THE FACTS."

9. WHILE HEADING THE EDUCATION MINISTRY, MRS. THATCHER
EVIDENCED HER PREOCCUPATION WITH SUCH "MIDDLE-CLASS"
VIRTUES AS DISCIPLINE IN THE CLASS ROOM AND TRADITIONALISM
IN EDUCATION. SHE HAD VERY POOR RELATIONS WITH THE

NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS. IT WAS DURING THIS PERIOD THAT SHE WON THE NICKNAME OF "THATCHER THE MILK-SNATCHER" FOR CUTTING FREE MILK OUT OF SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS.

10. MRS. THATCHER'S DRIVE MADE IT OBVIOUS THAT SHE WOULD NOT BE CONTENT TO REMAIN IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH

AND HOUSING, AND EDUCATION ARENA, WHICH TRADITIONALLY HAS BEEN THE RESTING PLACE OF LEADING WOMEN MP'S BOTH IN THE CONSERVATIVE AND IN THE LABOR PARTY. HEATH RECOGNIZED THIS IN MARCH 1974, WHEN HE MADE HER SHADOW JOINT TREASURY SPOKESMAN ALONG WITH HIS FAITHFUL SUPPORTER, ROBERT CARR.

11. IN THIS POST, SHE WAS THE FAVORITE OF RIGHT-WING BACKBENCHERS FOR HER ESPOUSAL OF "FREE MARKET" ECONOMIC THEORY AND OTHER ORTHODOX TORY PRINCIPLES. SHE BECAME A CLOSE FRIEND OF SIR KEITH JOSEPH, THE INTELLECTUAL LEADER OF THE RIGHT WING, AND TEAMED WITH HIM IN ATTACKING HEATH FOR DESERTING TORY ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES. SHE ESPECIALLY CENSURED HEATH FOR ADOPTING PRICE CONTROLS AND FOR SUBSIDIZING INDUSTRIAL FIRMS. SHE SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT USE PUBLIC FUNDS TO BAIL OUT FIRMS THAT HAVE FALLEN ON BAD TIMES.

12. SURPRISE UPSET: IT WAS FIRST RUMORED THAT MRS. THATCHER MIGHT RUN AGAINST HEATH FOR THE PARTY LEADERSHIP SHORTLY AFTER THE TORY DEFEAT IN THE OCTOBER 1974 GENERAL ELECTION. THE RUMOR SEEMED UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, BECAUSE SHE APPARENTLY HAD NO ORGANIZED FOLLOWING. MOREOVER, HER COMMITMENT TO THE IDEAS OF THE PARTY'S RIGHT WING SEEMED LIKELY TO PROVE A HANDICAP.

13. ONE CLUE TO HER SURPRISING UPSET OF HEATH WAS THE
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FACT THAT, WHILE ALL THE OTHER POWER BROKERS IN THE PARTY INITIALLY DECLARED THEMSELVES FOR HEATH, EDWARD DU CANN, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BACKBENCHERS' ORGANIZATION, THE 1922 COMMITTEE, DID NOT. A MERCHANT BANKER WITH VIEWS SIMILAR TO THATCHER'S, HE HAD BEEN EASED OUT OF THE PARTY CHAI-
MANSHIP BY HEATH AND HAD NOT RECEIVED A CABINET POST.

14. ON THE EVE OF THE SECOND BALLOT, IT BECAME EVIDENT THAT THE REVOLT AGAINST HEATH AND WHITELAW WAS WIDE-SPREAD. MRS. THATCHER HAD MORE SUPPORT AMONG THE LOCAL CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATIONS AND EVEN IN THE PROGRESSIVE YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS THAN THE NATIONAL PRESS AND THE MODERATE "ESTABLISHMENT" HAD CREDITED HER WITH.

15. SHADOW CABINET ASSOCIATES: ACCORDING TO PRESS

REPORTS, HEATH HAS TURNED DOWN MRS. THATCHER'S OFFER OF A POST, BUT WHITELAW HAS ACCEPTED HER REQUEST TO SERVE AS DEPUTY PARTY LEADER. SPECULATION IS RIFE AS TO WHETHER SHE WILL NAME HER FRIEND, SIR KEITH JOSEPH, TO BE SHADOW CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER. IF SHE DOES, IT WILL BE A HARD BLOW TO PARTY MODERATES. AT THE SAME TIME, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT, DURING HER CAMPAIGN SHE SAID THAT ENOCH POWELL, WHO WAS THE LEADER OF THE FAR-RIGHT TORIES

UNTIL HE LEFT THE PARTY, WOULD HAVE TO WORK HIS PASSAGE BACK IF HE WISHED TO REJOIN IT.

16. THATCHER MAY LOOK TO SIR ALEC DOUGLAS-HOME, WHOM SHE PROFESSES TO ADMIRE GREATLY, FOR GUIDANCE ON INTER-NATIONAL ISSUES. BUT UNLESS SHE OBTAINS A SHADOW FOREIGN SECRETARY WHOM SHE TRUSTS, SHE WILL PROBABLY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THOSE FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS WHO HAVE BEEN CLOSEST TO THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

17. DURING HER CAMPAIGN FOR THE PARTY LEADERSHIP, MRS. THATCHER WAS TAXED ABOUT THE FACT THAT HER CAREER HAS BEEN ENTIRELY IN THE FIELD OF DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND THAT SHE HAS NO EXPERIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. SHE REMARKED: "I AM THE FIRST TO UNDERSTAND I AM NOT EXPERT IN EVERY SUBJECT. BUT ANYONE WITH MY SCIENTIFIC AND LEGAL TRAINING IS CAPABLE OF PICKING UP THE ODD BITS OF INFORMATION." CONFIDENTIAL

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TION."

18. FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICIES: DURING HER CAMPAIGN FOR THE PARTY LEADERSHIP, MRS. THATCHER STRONGLY ENDORSED CONTINUED UK MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, WHICH SHE CHARACTERIZED AS A "MORAL ISSUE."

19. AT THE SAME TIME, SHE ATTACKED THE CUTS IN BRITISH DEFENSE FORCES CONTEMPLATED BY THE WILSON GOVERNMENT. SHE SAID THAT BRITISH MORALE MUST BE IN A POOR STATE IF "A GREAT NATION ACQUIESCES IN THE RUNNING DOWN OF ITS DEFENSES AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS ALLIES, AND ALLOWS ITSELF TO BE BLINKERED IN ITS APPROACH TO EUROPE BY NIGGLING ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE PRICE OF TINNED FRUIT."

20. SHE THUS IMPLIED THAT UNDER HER LEADERSHIP THE TORIES WILL PICK UP ALL OF THE DEFENSE SERVICES' COMPLAINTS WHEN THE DEFENSE REVIEW REPORT COMES TO THE FLOOR OF COMMONS IN MARCH. THIS MAY EMBARRASS WILSON WITH HIS BACKBENCHERS AND MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO MOVE TOWARD A BROAD COMPROMISE ON DEFENSE REDUCTIONS.

21. MRS. THATCHER'S OFF-HAND REMARK ON DEFENSE POLICY
SEEMS TO INDICATE, MOREOVER, THAT SHE WILL BE A SUPPORTER
OF NATO. SHE WILL MOST LIKELY ALSO CONTINUE THE TRA-
DITIONAL CONSERVATIVE POLICY OF STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE
OF STRONG TIES WITH THE US. HER REMARKS ON THE
IMPORTANCE OF THE EC SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT SHE MAY, LIKE
HEATH, FAVOR THE EUROPEAN CONNECTION OVER THE US. SHE
WILL PROBABLY SHARE DOUGLAS-HOME'S DISTRUST OF THE SOVIETS
AND THEREFORE MAY TAKE A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD MBFR AND
CSCE. INGERSOLL

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